

The Plaza Hotel Pioneer Park El Paso, Texas



PROJECT INFORMATION

Building Type: Boutique Hotel
Year Built: 1930
Renovation: \$78M renovation completed in 2020*
Stories: 9
Rooms: 130 Rooms and Suites
Event Space: 7,600 Sq. Ft.
Square Feet: 147,650 Sq. Ft.
Cooling/Tons: 44 Tons

HVAC Challenge: Preserve historic architecture, space, and ambiance while modernizing HVAC for energy efficiency and guest comfort

HVAC Solution: Daikin VRV System

*Hotel Online

VRV technology helps preserve historic hotel character while supporting energy efficiency and guest comfort

"The Plaza Hotel renovation shows why VRV should be part of the early HVAC discussion on projects where architecture matters. It can give design teams the flexibility to meet modern comfort requirements without forcing major changes to the building itself."

– AP Sharma

Director, VRV, Product Marketing
 Daikin Comfort Technologies
 North America, Inc.

The Plaza Hotel Pioneer Park, originally opened as the El Paso Hilton, is one of downtown El Paso's defining historic hotels. Located at Pioneer Plaza, the hotel opened on November 30, 1930, and was one of Conrad Hilton's early high-rise hotels.

Designed by Trost & Trost, the 19-story building helped shape the El Paso skyline. Its Pueblo Art Deco interior and warm architectural details contributed to the hotel's reputation as "El Paso's living room."** Notable spaces and details include a grand, high-ceilinged lobby, a lobby lounge/library area with fireplace, and an array of refined public spaces with heavy leather furniture, ornate lighting, a hand-painted ceiling, stained glass accents, tooled-leather-wrapped columns, and other period-inspired appointments. It was and remains one of the city's most recognizable downtown landmarks.

**William Kell, COO, Franklin Mountain Investments

THE CHALLENGE

After decades as a major downtown hotel, the property sat vacant for many years until Franklin Mountain Management, led by El Paso businessman Paul Foster, acquired the property with a vision to restore the hotel to its original grandeur while adding the modern convenience, amenities, and comfort expected by discerning guests. The challenge, as with many restoration projects, was how to retain the original architecture, interior character, and sense of space while incorporating state-of-the-art mechanical systems, including HVAC. Foster engaged Cooper Carry to help resolve the many challenges and guide the restoration of the El Paso landmark.

THE SOLUTION

For the Plaza Hotel, the HVAC system had to do more than meet heating and cooling requirements. It had to support the restoration of a historic El Paso landmark without compromising the property's beauty, ambiance, and Pueblo Art Deco character that make it distinctive. That meant the project team needed a system flexible enough to serve guest rooms, public areas, and specialty spaces while preserving ceiling heights, minimizing visible mechanical impact, and delivering the level of comfort guests expect from a luxury hotel.

The Daikin VRV Heat Recovery technology provided that solution. The heart of the system was 20 VRV heat recovery systems, leveraging multi-port branch selectors to reduce piping complexity and product/installation costs.

THE SOLUTION SUMMARY

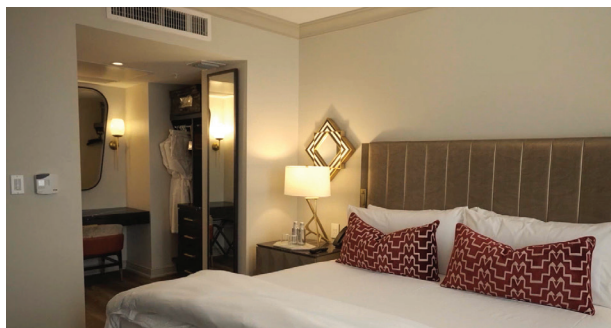
- » Low-static ducted units for guest rooms
- » Wall-mounted ductless units for minimal impact areas
- » High-static and multi-position ducted air handlers for large or irregular rooms
- » Ductless cassette unit recessed into ceiling in aesthetic Agave Spirits Room
- » Ductless Ceiling Suspended units where ducting is infeasible
- » Ductless Concealed Floor-standing unit floor-standing unit for Agave Bar/Tasting Room

Unlike conventional HVAC systems that can require large ductwork, deep ceiling plenums, and intrusive mechanical layouts, Daikin VRV uses a compact, modular approach. The system distributes refrigerant to multiple indoor units, allowing heating and cooling to be tailored to the needs of individual areas, i.e., precise load matching. For the Plaza Hotel, that flexibility was especially important in spaces where architectural character could not be sacrificed for mechanical convenience.

In the lobby and other public areas, the compact profile of the VRV system helped avoid the need for a large plenum, which would have lowered ceiling heights and altered the original sense of scale. Preserving that vertical space was essential to maintaining the hotel's historic presence and guest experience. In the guest rooms, the small system footprint preserved usable space and ceiling height, allowing the rooms to feel open, comfortable, and thoughtfully appointed.

The design team matched indoor units to different spaces with broad flexibility. Project notes show they installed low-static ducted units in most guest rooms, complemented by wall-mounted units, high-static ducted units, multi-position air handlers, ceiling-suspended units, and a concealed floor-standing unit for specialized areas. The HVAC design followed the architecture rather than forcing it to accommodate the system.

Daikin's VRV Heat Recovery system delivers comfort at room and zone levels. Its inverter-driven technology adjusts output to match demand, rather than running continuously at full capacity. This technology helps maintain stable temperatures, supports energy efficiency, and provides quiet operation. Hotel guests enjoy natural comfort: steady temperature, low noise (down to 29 dBA), and personalized comfort in rooms or public spaces.



For ownership and operations, VRV also supported the Plaza Hotel's sustainability and cost goals. A *Texas Pace Authority* case study cited project goals of approximately 1.5 million kWh in annual electricity savings, about 808 tons of annual CO₂ reduction, and approximately \$250,000*** in yearly utility savings across the property. The system's all-electric operation, heat recovery between zones, centralized controls, and ability to manage

energy use in unoccupied rooms all contributed to an efficient hotel operation.

The result was an HVAC solution aligned with both restoration and performance goals. Daikin VRV helped the Plaza Hotel preserve its historic character, protect guest comfort, and manage operating costs, while providing the property with a modern, flexible, scalable system capable of supporting a landmark hotel well into the future.

***Texas Pace Authority (TX-PACE)

OUTCOME

The Daikin *VRV* (all-electric) Heat Recovery system helped the Plaza Hotel achieve modern comfort without compromising the historic character that defines the property. By limiting the need for large ductwork and deep ceiling plenums, the system helped preserve ceiling heights in the lobby, guest rooms, and other architecturally sensitive spaces.

Guests experience comfort through quiet operation, stable temperatures, and individual room control. Guest rooms retain usable floor area and ceiling height, preserving space for furnishings, finishes, and design details that enhance the hotel's ambiance.

The system delivered practical benefits for ownership as well. The *VRV* system requires limited maintenance, offers centralized control, and provides energy efficiency by matching heating and cooling output to demand. Further, many legacy Daikin *VRV* systems can be upgraded to newer *VRV* technology, helping extend system life without requiring a full replacement.

The restored landmark balances preservation, comfort, and performance. Daikin *VRV* enables the Plaza Hotel to protect its historic image while providing guests with the quiet, precise comfort they expect from a modern hotel.

THE SOLUTION SUMMARY

Daikin *VRV* technology combines quiet operation, compact modular equipment, long piping flexibility, and inverter-driven compressor performance to help solve difficult HVAC challenges in new construction and retrofit applications. By matching output to actual building demand, *VRV* systems can provide comfort while limiting wasted energy. Their modular design can also make installation easy in projects where space, access, weight, noise, and architectural impact are important considerations.

VARIABLE REFRIGERANT VOLUME (VRV) FEATURES/BENEFITS

Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) technology	Moves refrigerant only where it is needed, allowing different areas of a building to receive heating or cooling based on actual demand.
Inverter-driven scroll compressors	Match system output to the building's changing load for comfort while limiting energy waste.
Variable-speed operation	Helps manage sound levels by allowing the system to run at low speeds instead of cycling abruptly on and off. It makes <i>VRV</i> well-suited for hotels, offices, residences, and other occupied spaces where comfort includes sound control.
Modular outdoor units	Small, light modules can simplify installation in retrofit projects where space, access, structure, and crane time may be limited.
Compact footprint	Limits the mechanical space required, helping preserve usable space and minimizing visual or architectural impact.
Long refrigerant piping capability	Gives designers flexibility to place outdoor units away from sensitive areas while still serving indoor spaces effectively.
Zoned comfort control	Allows different rooms, floors, or areas to be conditioned independently, supporting guest, tenant, or occupant comfort.
Heat recovery capability	It can provide heating and cooling to different areas simultaneously, which is valuable in buildings with varied exposures, uses, and occupancy patterns.
Phased installation flexibility	Systems can often be expanded or configured in stages, making <i>VRV</i> useful for renovations, tenant fit-outs, and projects with phased construction.
Advanced controls and diagnostics	Built-in monitoring and service tools can help facility teams identify issues, support maintenance, and support long-term system performance.

"Space is one of the defining experiences of the Plaza. You feel it immediately in the lobby, with its soaring ceiling, and again in the guest rooms, where the added volume creates a greater sense of comfort and refinement. The Daikin VRV system helped preserve that space. Without it, ceilings would have had to come down, reducing the grandeur of the public areas and limiting what we could do with the rooms."

– **T.Jack Bagby**

Principal, Cooper Carry

PROJECT LINKS

The Plaza Hotel Pioneer Park was featured in Season 4 of *Hotels ByDESIGN*. Click to hear the architect discuss the benefits of Daikin VRV in this project at <https://daikincomfort.com/industry-solutions/built-for-business/hotels-hospitality>

ADDITIONAL PROJECT OVERVIEWS

Cooper Carry

<https://www.coopercarry.com/projects/el-paso-plaza-historic-hotel-renovation/>

In*Situ Architecture

<https://insituarc.weebly.com/plaza-hotel.html>



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

Before purchasing this appliance, read important information about its estimated annual energy consumption, yearly operating cost, or energy efficiency rating that is available from your retailer. Actual savings and costs will vary. Cost and savings statements are applicable solely to the installation indicated. For additional information please contact the installing contractor, distributor or factory representatives.

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